Met Office

February 2002

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1961-1990.

UK overview

A very mild month across much of the UK, although temperatures were near normal in the Northern Isles. Another wet month, with many places receiving two to three times their normal rainfall.

Eskdalemuir reported 16 cm of lying snow on the 23rd. Folkestone reached a temperature of 15.1 °C on the 22nd.

England and Wales diary of highlights

Very mild, wet and windy especially in the north-west. Sunnier in the south-east.

1st to 4th A deep complex low pressure centred between Iceland and Scotland brought very unsettled, wet and windy weather. Bands of rain and showers, often heavy with occasional thunder, swept across the region. The very mild temperatures, were offset by frequent gales especially around coasts (a gust of 79 knots was recorded at Capel Curig/North Wales on the 1st).

5th to 13th Depressions passing to the north and north-west of the UK continued to bring very mild unsettled conditions with periods of rain and showers at times, as more Atlantic fronts traversed the UK. Some of the showers had thunder mixed in, however the sun shone in between, with the south-east benefiting the most. On the 10th very heavy rain affected north-west areas with Capel Curig being deluged by 121 mm of rain in 24 hours causing local flooding. The low pressure moved to Finland by the 12th, allowing pressure to rise over the UK.

14th to 18th An anticyclone over the region provided a temporary respite from the wind and rain. Mainly quiet, dry, sunny weather prevailed but with overnight frost, the temperature falling to -6.2 °C at Benson in Oxfordshire early on the 15th. During the 17th and 18th a weak cold front moved south-east.

19th to 23rd Wet and windy conditions soon returned as active lows moved east to Denmark during the 19th and 20th. By the 22nd/23rd a deep depression over Scandinavia brought more strong winds and showers some of which were accompanied by hail and thunder. Strong winds affected the Vale of York on the 22nd with a gust of 67 knots at Leeds. It was very mild in the south at first, Folkestone in Kent reaching 15.1 °C on the 22nd. Precipitation turned wintry in the north and north-east later on the 23rd, with snow showers down to East Anglia.

24th to 28th Frequent snow showers over northern England left a wintry landscape by the morning of the 24th with 5 to 10 cm of snow on high ground. However the snow was soon washed away on the 25th as a vigorous low tracked eastwards across Scotland overnight the **25th/26th**. There were more gales and heavy rain in many areas especially the north-west, the rain turned showery later with some hail and thunder mixed in. Gusts over 70 knots were frequent in north Wales, while eastern counties of England had gusts up to 65 knots. A residual trough over Scotland on the 27th migrated slowly southwards perpetuating the showery regime. A number of places had hail and thunder especially along the English Channel coast.

Scotland diary of highlights

Cyclonic westerly, with plenty of rain in the west.

A disturbed weather pattern affected Scotland for almost the whole of February, with a succession of deep depressions passing close by and driving active fronts across the country. A feature of the month was that the axis of low pressure extended from the Atlantic into the Norwegian Sea, so that winds were westerly rather than south-westerly. The jet stream lay to the south of Scotland for much of the time, so that although there was plenty of rain, the most stormy weather often crossed England rather than Scotland.

An interlude of quiet anticyclonic weather in mid-month separated two long spells of disturbed weather. During the second spell, winds were often north-westerly and it was cold enough for snow to descend to low levels at times.

The first period of disturbed weather brought several wet days, especially the 1st, 8th, 10th and 11th, with more showery conditions on the other days. Stornoway experienced a gust of 77 knots on the 1st.

The mid-month weather window lasted from the 13th to the 17th and started with clear, cold air and the temperature dropping to -7.6 °C at Corgarff. Milder air spread around the top of the high to allow the temperature to approach 13 °C at Lochcarron on the 15th and Fyvie Castle on the 16th.

The return to cyclonic conditions with periods of heavy rain was emphatic, with 50 mm recorded at Sloy on the 19th and 87 mm at Dalmally on the 21st.

The most wintry period of the month lasted from the 22nd to the 24th, with north-westerly gales driving frequent snow showers across the country on the 22nd. Eskdalemuir reported 16 cm of snow on the ground and drifting snow closed roads in Caithness. A drop in the wind on the 24th allowed the temperature to fall to -13.2 °C at Kinbrace.

The last few days continued unsettled, with further outbreaks of rain or showers, and snow on high ground.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

Wet, but mild and sunny. This was a wet February month across all areas of the province. Conditions were however also bright with above average sunshine in all but north-western parts. The month as a whole proved mild, however a cold spell at the end of the month brought snow and wintry showers to all areas.

1st to 2nd Mild, but unsettled, with rain or showers and spells of sunshine.

3rd to 4th Cold, with snow in western and northern parts on 3rd. Much milder, but dull and wet on 4th.

5th to 10th Unsettled. Good spells of sunshine between showers, gave sunny days on the 6th and 7th. Dull and very wet with thunderstorms in many parts on 8th. Very mild on 7th, 8th and 10th with daily temperatures reaching maximum values typically between 11 °C and 14 °C.

11th to 17th Largely dry, mild and bright, with only scattered showers in some locations on 11th, 12th, 16th and 17th. Plentiful sunshine was recorded across the province from the 11th to the 14th, however the 16th proved dull in all areas.

18th to 28th Further unsettled and often windy weather, with bands of rain followed by scattered showers and sunny spells. Gales and thunderstorms were recorded on the 20th, while cold snaps brought snow and wintry showers to all areas on the 22nd/23rd and from the 26th to the 28th.

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